Dear Elizabeth (and David),

2/22/84

When your father told me of your forensics project I suggested, as he has told you, I'm sure, Dr. Martin Luther King's speech the night before he was assassinated and President Kennedy's at American University. I told your father I'd lend you my tape of the King speech and I enclose it. Even if you have the text I think there is a value in listening to it.

It occurs to me that a little of the background, some unpublished, may be of interest.

A week earlier Dr. King had been in Memphis to lead a march in support of the sanitation workers, who were almost entirely black and were on strike because their wages were so incredibly low. What triggered the strike was a terrible accident in which two of the black workers were crushed in the compacting aparatus of a garbage truck. Almost the entire black community and much of the white citizenry supported the strike. It had almost been settled but the then Mayor, a real dumdum named Loeb, a successful businessman but politically close to Genghis Khan, prevented that settlement. The march of the week before the assassination was rather makeshift and none of Dr. King's taff was involved in it. As a result some of the youngsters started trashing as soon as the march started. Actually, Dr. King was late getting to it. So, it was rescheduled and this time he had his own people there, to be certain that it was nonviolent. It was announced, so it was known, that he'd return to Memphis April 2. Many of his own and Memphis people urged him not to go back but he was determined that in that dangerous situation he would lead a march that was not violent.

In his speech he referred to the fact that his plane was delayed because the airline, as he had been told, took great precautions, even searching the luggage. The truth is that someone phoned the FBI and told it that he would be assassinated. The Memphis FBI told everybody except Dr. King or any of his people. I learned this in a Freedom of Information lawsuit in which the FBI hid those records from me. When I learned of their existence I requested them and the FBI refused on the ground that they were not relevant. It actually later made the same claim, after the judge compelled them to give me that file. Examination of that file discloses that the FBI conducted no investigation at all and after the assassination closed out the file as not relevant!

The city sought an injunction and got it. Dr. King spent much time with his legal and other people on this. He also spent just about the entire night of the day he got there conferring, as the FBI records I got go into. Among the people with whom he met were some wealthy white women who were active in civil rights matters. While the FBI did not investigate the known threat, it sure did investigate those women, even sending agents to where they were going on vacation, in Florida.

He was tired and asked Dr. Ralph Abernathy to speak the night of his speech so he could rest, but Abernathy went back to the motel and told Dr. King that the crowd would not accept any substitute. So, Dr. King then made this speech. And the next day he was killed. But I do not think he expected to be killed the next day. Rather do I think his reference is to the general situation, threats against him in general. I think the threats to which he makes specific reference are other threats I report in Frame-Up. But he was more or less used to them.

If your father has copies of the tape made, I'd appreciate it if before it is returned to me one is made for and sent to Mr. Les Payne, 167 Brooklyn Ave., Huntington, N.Y. 11743. His daughter is old enough to understand this and I think she might perhaps want to listen to it and the shorter and better-known speech on the other side. I'll let him know why it is being sent - if it is.

Best to you all,